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FM AMEMBASSY TIRANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4371
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 2919
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 2713
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1134
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1193
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1083
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 5284
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO 0431
RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE 4111
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB 2936
RUFNPKB/COMUSNAVEUR NAPLES IT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TIRANA 000586

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DEPT FOR EUR/SCE (BENEDICT, SAINZ)
NSC FOR BRAUN

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TAGS: PREL AL

SUBJECT: PM BERISHA ON MONTENEGRO, KOSOVO, MACEDONIA AND A
VISIT TO ALBANIA BY PRESIDENT BUSH

REF: A. TIRANA 585

1B. TIRANA 573

Classified By: Ambassador Marcie B. Ries for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a June 1 meeting with Ambassador focused mainly on Iran (Ref A), Prime Minister Berisha also shared his thoughts on Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and made a pitch for a visit by President Bush to Albania. Berisha expressed serious concern about upcoming elections in Macedonia and possible fallout from that on Kosovo's status. He suggested use of prominent Albanians as monitors in those elections and pledged to continue to urge moderation on Kosovar and Macedonia's ethnic Albanian leaders. End Summary.

12. (C) Berisha, noting that 22 percent of Montenegro's population were "minorities", said that Montenegrin independence was a contribution to stability in the region and made the region as a whole "more free." Belgrade's stance was "realistic", but he cautioned that Belgrade would likely argue that its good conduct vis a vis Montenegro should count as a "concession" in its favor during status talks on Kosovo. Ultimately, however, he believed that such a position would be only "temporary and would lose its meaning."

13. (C) On Kosovo, he said his contacts there seemed less rigid in their positions on some issues than they were seven months ago. He said Kosovar leaders now understand the level of responsibility they bear in the negotiations and afterwards. Berisha felt the Kosovars would be sensitive to messages from Albania and undertook to make a strong pitch for "responsibility" and "flexibility" in their status talks during his upcoming (June 15) visit to Pristina. He said he would also offer help to the new PISG Ministry of Interior and police to fight regional organized crime.

14. (C) Berisha felt that the upcoming elections in Macedonia were "a serious problem" not only for Macedonia but

also for Kosovo status progress. He said he has counseled Kosovar leaders and Macedonia's ethnic Albanian leaders (Ahmeti and Xhaferi) to strive for free and fair elections. He also encouraged Macedonian PM Buckovski to use centralized counting of ballots as it "prevents the local militant effect and bribing of commissioners." Berisha also suggested that it may be useful to have prominent Albanians, "perhaps MPs and others," serve as monitors in the Macedonian elections.

¶5. (C) Berisha pledged to remind Kosovar leaders of the disastrous consequences of Kosovar activists interfering in the Macedonia election. (see Ref B)

¶6. (C) Berisha made a very strong pitch for a visit by President Bush to Albania. He said he had himself extended an invitation directly to the president while at the UNGA in September, but since the exchange was so brief we wanted to tell the Ambassador that this was a genuine, heart-felt invitation. He said he had instructed Ambassador Sallabanda to mention this during his recent credentialing ceremony. Noting that no sitting US President had visited since Albania's escape from communism 15 years ago, he said that there was no one Albanians would welcome more warmly than a president of the United States.

RIES